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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3504

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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FOREIGN RELATIONS

HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

July 7, 2008

U. S. Department of Transportation
Docket Operations
West Building Ground Floor
Room W12-140
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Docket No. FTA-2008-0015

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to express my concerns with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)'s proposed rule limiting bus service to and from schools by regional transit authorities (RTA).

Under current FTA rules, federally subsidized RTAs must agree not to engage in "school bus operations," defined as "transportation by bus exclusively for school students, personal and equipment." The proposed rule would expand the definition of school bus operations to include, "any service that a reasonable person would conclude primarily was designed to accommodate students and school personnel, and only incidentally to serve the non-student general public."

Many RTAs across Ohio carry a significant number of public school students daily. The buses they board are fixed route service with public schedules that are open to any rider. These routes do not exclusively serve school students and personnel, and so they are legitimate under the current rule. However, the proposed rule would require RTAs to terminate these routes because they primarily serve school students and personnel.

The FTA must consider how the proposed rule would impact students currently riding public transportation to and from school. If RTAs are required to suspend these routes, how will students be transported to and from school? Given our current fuel crisis, requiring that transportation be shifted to a private bus operator would significantly increase costs for school districts. In many areas, public transportation is the most cost effective and efficient method of transporting students and personnel to and from school.

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DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKETS

STATE OFFICES:
36 EAST SEVENTH STREET
ROOM 2615
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45202
(513) 684-3265

1240 EAST NINTH STREET
ROOM 2955
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44139
(216) 522-7095

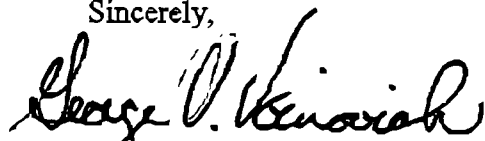
37 WEST BROAD STREET
ROOM 300
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215
(614) 469-6697
(614) 469-6774 (CASEWORK)
(800) 205-8448 (CASEWORK)

78 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
P.O. Box 57
NELSONVILLE, OHIO 45764
(740) 441-6410

420 MADISON AVENUE
ROOM 1210
TOLEDO, OHIO 43604
(419) 259-3895

I would appreciate your consideration of my concerns during your review of the rules defining and governing the provision of service to schools by RTAs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George V. Voinovich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" being particularly prominent.

George V. Voinovich
Unites States Senator